

Message Text

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12

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 T-03 ACDA-19

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9858

INFO DOD WASHDC

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MARR, UK

SUBJECT: DEFENSE DEBATE IN HOUSE OF COMMONS

1. TORY GOVERNMENT' S FY 1973 DEFENSE ESTIMATES PASSED ITS SECOND READING IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON 19 MARCH BY A COMFORTABLE MARGIN OF 300 TO 264. GOVERNMENT' S DEFENSE OF INCREASED DEFENSE SPENDING WAS A LOW- KEY AND REASONED ONE, STRESSING NEED TO MAINTAIN STRENGTH OF NATO IN THE FACE OF QUALITATIVE WARSAW PACT IMPROVEMENTS. LORD LAMBTON, DEFENSE UNDERSECRETARY, PARRIED LABOR' S CRITICISM OF BRITISH SPENDING IN EXCESS OF THAT OF ITS EUROPEAN ALLIES BY STRESSING BRITAIN' S ROLE - BOTH TACTICAL AND STRATEGIC - WITHIN THE ALLIANCE AND HMG' S DETERMINATION NOT TO PULL BACK FROM WORLDWIDE RESPONSIBILITIES. HE ECHOED FAMILIAR THEMES THROUGHTOUT, NOTING THAT IT WOULD MAKE "... NEITHER POLITICAL NOR STRATEGIC SENSE FOR THE AMERICANS TO CONTINUE THEIR SUPPORT OF THE ALLIANCE IF IT EVER BECAME CLEAR THAT WE IN EUROPE LACK THE DETERMINATION AND THE CONFIDENCE TO MAKE OUR OWN CONTRIBUTION TO WESTERN DEFENSE."
 2. POLARIS/ POSEIDON QUESTION GOT ONLY LIMITED PLAY, WITH LORD BALNIEL STATING THAT THE ISSUE STILL IS UNDER
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REVIEW AND THAT NO DECISION YET TAKEN EITHER TO STAND ON PRESENT POLARIS SYSTEM OR TO UPDATE IT WITH POSEIDON, TRIDENT OR SOME OTHER OPTION. BALNIEL SAID THAT UK-FRENCH NUCLEAR COLLABORATION HAD BEEN DISCUSSED ONLY TO THE EXTENT THAT BOTH COUNTRIES HAD AGREED THAT THE PROBLEM WAS ONE FOR THE FUTURE. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, HE SAID, LIES IN THEIR DEFENSE POLICIES AND ATTITUDES TOWARD NATO, AND THE FACT THAT NEITHER NEEDS TO CONTEMPLATE EARLY REPLACEMENT OF ITS

EXISTING NUCLEAR SUBMARINE FORCES.

3. A LABOR AMENDMENT ATTACKING THE " SHARP INFLATIONARY INCREASE IN DEFENSE EXPENDITURE" AND CALLING FOR ACTION BY HMG TO BRING BRITISH DEFENSE SPENDING INTO LINE WITH THAT OF ITS EUROPEAN ALLIES IN THE CONTEXT OF AN IMPROVED EUROPEAN SECURITY SITUATION FOLLOWING CSCE DREW A STRONG AND CAUSTIC REBUTTAL FROM TORY SPOKESMEN AND WAS REJECTED 301-264.

ANNENBERG

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*** Current Classification *** UNCLASSIFIED

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